

Respirator Fit Tests



What is required?

All respirators leak! Some types more than others. It is for this reason that OSHA requires the fit of all tight-fitting respirators to be tested **annually**.



There are many reasons why respirators leak. These include;

- Poor Fit
- Facial hair
- Improper donning
- Defective equipment
- Breathing rate exceeds the capabilities of the mask

The annual fit tests address the problem of poor fit.

There are 2 basic types of fit tests, **qualitative** and **quantitative**. Qualitative fit tests give you a PASS/FAIL result. They use smoke or a particulate that you can smell or taste when leakage occurs.

Quantitative uses a machine that samples a test atmosphere inside the mask and gives you an exact measurement of the leakage into the mask.

In most cases either method is acceptable. If you are working with toxic gases in your work area, you should check to make sure OSHA doesn't mandate quantitative testing.

Respirator manufacturers make each face piece in multiple sizes because not all faces are the same. Generally, these run in small, medium, and large. Most people wear a medium, but don't assume that is always the case. Your employer should have multiple sizes available in your workplace.

During the respirator fit test, the worker has the opportunity to don and doff the device with supervision and wear it in a test atmosphere. This is a good time to ask questions of the tester and for new workers to get some experience with the device.

You will be asked to perform a few simple tasks like deep breathing and speaking. With the qualitative fit tests, if you taste or smell the material while the mask is on, you have a leaking respirator.

Don't be alarmed if you fail the test! The tester will retry after adjusting the respirator. If you still can't get a fit, a different size or model mask will be made available until one is located that fits your face.

Fit tests are good for one year only.

What you need to know!

You must be clean shaven to receive a fit test.

You will be tested with the same type you use at work.

You need to have training annually if you use respirators.

If respirator use is required, not voluntary, you must have a medical evaluation before you can use respirators.